



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Doug Sutherland - Commissioner of Public Lands



Washington State's Aquatic Reserve Program

Protecting sensitive aquatic habitats

Washington's marine and freshwater environments are prized by the people of the state. The 2.4 million acres of these state-owned aquatic lands are managed by Washington's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to foster water-dependent use, public access, environmental protection and use of the renewable resources.

Established in 2002, the state Aquatic Reserves Program is part of DNR's efforts to protect sites with important ecological features and habitats on state-owned aquatic lands. This is accomplished through preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the sites. The program evaluates and designates reserves on state aquatic lands; already 15,000 acres are either established aquatic reserves or awaiting formal designation.

The Aquatic Reserve Program focus is to conserve high quality native aquatic ecosystems in both freshwater and marine environments. This ecosystem-scale protection ensures that entire communities of important and unique aquatic organisms and their physical environments are conserved for this and future generations. Designation helps protect these ecosystems and their associated plants and animals.

DNR has established ecological criteria to ensure that site selection is based on sound science and the focus is maintained.

Many uses within reserves

It is important to note that people of our state have flocked to areas adjacent to its waters, and industry and commerce are focused there. Due to these long established uses, it may be necessary for DNR to continue some existing mixed uses within Aquatic Reserves. DNR will emphasize mitigating impacts by enhancing the health of the ecosystem components in the reserve, and will work to ensure that the negative impacts of existing uses are reduced over the long term.

Three types of reserves

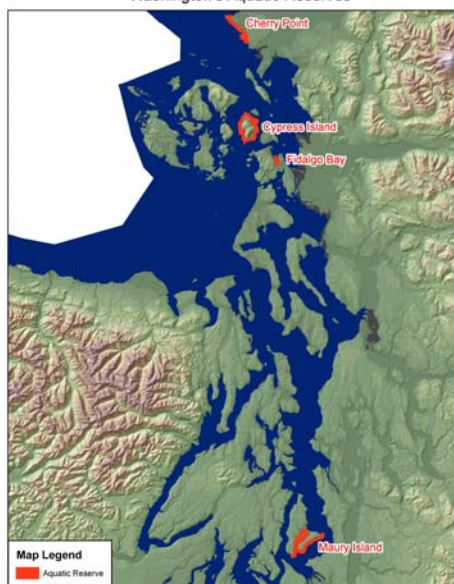
Three types of state Aquatic Reserves can be established through the program:

- Environmental reserves that promote conservation and restoration.
- Scientific reserves that provide unique aquatic habitats for research.
- Education reserves that promote opportunities for field-based environmental education.

Establishing new reserves

Public or private organizations or individuals may propose a site for designation as a state aquatic reserve. Interested parties submit a letter of intent (proposing a new reserve), which is reviewed by DNR to determine if the site meets state Aquatic Reserves Program criteria.

Washington's Aquatic Reserves



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If it appears to meet the criteria, DNR requests that the proponent develop a full proposal for the candidate site, with help from DNR staff. The process promotes a close working relationship between DNR and the site proponent. Together they work to present the proposed site for public input at an open house forum to ensure all relevant information about the site is available during the later formal public review. DNR and proponents also work together to draft management goals and objectives for proper protection of the site.

Nominations welcomed during Summer 2007

DNR will begin a new nomination cycle in early summer of 2007. The following timeline provides a guide for this public process to those interested in participating.

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| 1. Call for Proposals | July, 2007 |
| 2. Letters of Intent Due | Late August |
| 3. Solicitation of Full Proposals | Late September |
| 4. Full Proposals Due | Mid-December, 2007 |

For more information regarding the process and the necessary information to include in a Letter of Intent, please refer to the Aquatic Reserves Program Implementation and Design Guidance, at www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/aqr/reserves/index.html, or contact the Aquatic Reserves Program Manager at (360) 902-1073.

Partnerships for Conservation

The Aquatic Reserves Program works with Tribes, non-governmental organizations, local, state and federal governments and private citizens in an effort to promote preservation and restoration of the State's important aquatic ecosystems. Aquatic Reserves provide an excellent opportunity for joint management, protection and restoration of aquatic lands.

One benefit of state Aquatic Reserves is that they can be designed and established to compliment other protective measures within or on lands adjacent to a site. Through the Aquatic Reserve site proposal process, interested groups and individuals can help promote protection of important aquatic habitat throughout the state.

